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TO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA IMMEDIATE 7881
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RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA IMMEDIATE 2000
RUEHCO/AMEMBASSY COTONOU IMMEDIATE 5711
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA IMMEDIATE 5432
RUEHLGB/AMEMBASSY KIGALI IMMEDIATE 6980
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE IMMEDIATE 4913
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA IMMEDIATE 0364
RUEHLS/AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE 7577
RUEHMB/AMEMBASSY MBABANE IMMEDIATE 2471
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA IMMEDIATE 4390
RUEHOU/AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU IMMEDIATE 8276
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE 1985
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 6278
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE 0133
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2825
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 1712
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3434
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6715

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 STATE 025557

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM MR
SUBJECT: POST-QADHAFI NEGOTIATIONS IN MAURITANIA --
ENCOURAGING THE AU PSC

REF: (A)NOUAKCHOTT 191 (B)NOUAKCHOTT 195
(C)NOUAKCHOTT 202

Classified By: AA/S Phillip Carter for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

SUMMARY:

11. Action Requested: See paragraphs 3-6.

12. (C) African Union (AU) Chairman Muammar Qadhafi's trip to Nouakchott has undermined recent positive African Union (AU) actions to restore democracy in Mauritania. The USG seeks to have the AU as a body reassert its authority by affirming its previous declarations, including calls for a return to constitutional order, suspension of Mauritania's AU membership, and targeted travel and financial sanctions on key military and civilian supporters of the military junta. As this month's chair of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), Benin can play a leadership role in advancing these objectives. Next month's chair, Burkina-Faso, may also play an important leadership role. Posts should approach the AU and its member states to urge AU unity of effort to implement its declarations. Please see paragraph 7 for background and supporting information to meet Department objectives.

OBJECTIVES (USAU)

13. (SBU) The Department instructs the U.S. Mission to the African Union (USAU) to seek a meeting as soon as possible, at the highest appropriate level, to pursue the following objectives:

-- Express appreciation for the AU's continuing, strong leadership in responding to the coup in Mauritania, which demonstrated complete disregard for the AU charter and is setting a dangerous precedent in the region.

-- Express the U.S. belief that the decision of the AU PSC

to impose sanctions on Mauritania was of historic importance in the political evolution of the AU.

-- Share U.S. concern that absent a prompt resolution to this crisis, and given the junta's failure to respond positively and in good faith to the AU's mediation efforts and the demands of the international community, we believe it is increasingly clear that immediate, targeted sanctions will be necessary, and urge the AU to move forward on its sanctions program.

-- Share U.S. view that President Abdallahi has been more than accommodating, expressing a willingness to hold early elections, form a unity government, and allow the junta leaders to return to their barracks with honor.

-- Urge the AU to reaffirm its previous declarations, including calls for a return to constitutional order, suspension of Mauritania's AU membership, and targeted financial and travel sanctions on key military and civilian supporters of the military junta.

-- Targeted financial and travel sanctions will not harm the local population of Mauritania, as some have stated. Rather, continued violations of the constitution by the Aziz regime has and will continue to cause great harm.

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ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES (OUAGADOUGOU, COTONOU, AND PSC COUNTRIES)

¶4. (SBU) In addition to the preceding points, the Department instructs Embassy Ougadougou to seek a meeting as soon as possible with President Compaore, or at the highest appropriate level, to pursue the following objectives:

-- Urge President Compaore to take a leadership role and leverage Burkina Faso's upcoming Chairmanship of AU PSC to reaffirm previous statements.

-- Reinforce USG concern that such blatant disregard for the AU charter is setting a dangerous precedent in the region, and throughout Africa.

¶5. (SBU) For all remaining posts, the Department instructs Embassies to seek a meeting as soon as possible at the highest appropriate level, to pursue objectives in paragraph 3 plus the following:

-- Reinforce USG concern that such blatant disregard for the AU charter is setting a dangerous precedent in the region, and throughout Africa.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES (TRIPOLI)

¶6. (SBU) For Tripoli, the Department instructs Embassy Tripoli to seek a meeting as soon as possible at the highest appropriate level, to pursue the following objectives:

-- Express U.S. disappointment with the course and outcome of Qadhafi's efforts in Mauritania which ran counter to earlier AU decisions and resulted in a serious setback for resolution of Mauritania's political crisis.

-- Urge Libya to voice public and private support for AU declarations regarding a return to constitutional order; suspension of Mauritania's AU membership; and implementation of targeted sanctions.

-- Encourage Libya to strengthen the AU as an institution

by adhering to its decisions and working for its goals. As AU's President, Qadhafi is bound by AU decisions.

BACKGROUND

¶7. (C) On February 20, the Mauritania "International Contact Group", which includes the AU, Arab League, Francophonie, United Nations, European Union, and Organization of the Islamic Conference, met in Paris to follow up on the February 5 AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) meeting. The February 5 meeting had decided to implement sanctions against the Mauritanian junta, and on February 20 the Contact Group endorsed efforts of AU Chair Muammar Qadhafi to negotiate a return to constitutional order and an end to the political crisis. A whirlwind diplomatic effort (Refs A and B), culminating in Qadhafi's trip to Nouakchott, only further muddied the political waters (Ref C). Qadhafi advocates a one-sided mediation policy out of step with the democratic principles of the AU by embracing the junta's plan for return to civilian rule via June elections. The international community, including the International Contact Group, has declared this plan unacceptable. Any further efforts by Qadhafi to mediate

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are unlikely to succeed, as he has lost credibility with the anti-coup forces. Maintaining momentum towards a return to constitutional order depends on an AU commitment to upholding previous statements. The junta will likely claim to have the support of the "international community's representative," but our perception is that Qadhafi was operating in bad faith and counter to the principles upheld by the AU PSC and of the International Contact Group. The upcoming March 24 meeting of the AU PSC under the chairmanship of Benin will be a key opportunity to restate the AU's opposition to the coup.

REPORTING DEADLINE

¶8. (U) All posts should report the results of their efforts by cable to AF/W Jane Dennison and AF/RSA Peter Barlerin by no later than Thursday, March 19. The Department appreciates your prompt attention to this matter.

CLINTON